



### Parashat Emor

#### The Sabbath Was Made for Man

ספר ויקרא

דבר אל-בני ישראל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ  
אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי...שְׁשַׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה  
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת שְׁבֻתוֹן מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא  
תַעֲשׂוּ

“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them:  
The appointed times of Hashem, that you are to designate  
as holy convocations, these are My appointed times...For  
six days of labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day  
of complete ceasing, a holy convocation; you shall not  
do any work.”

Leviticus 23:2,3

The word *moed* (appointment) in Hebrew can refer to a time or a place. Leviticus 23 is a list of God's appointed times; holy days that He gave to meet with His people. God calls these appointments, “a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places” (Leviticus 23:14). That means that they can never be replaced or abolished. They are to be celebrated by all of God's people wherever they live. These *moadim* include the weekly Sabbath, the festivals of Passover (*Pesach*), Pentecost (*Shavuot*), the Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*).

Many Christians apply the misnomer “Jewish festivals” to these times. However if you notice in the verse above, God prefers to call them “My appointed times” indicating that they have nothing to do with Jews and Judaism nor does God exclude non-Jews from observing them. After all, as Paul asks, “Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also” (Romans 3:29). Nowhere in Scripture are Gentiles given their own separate festival days. Neither the Gospels or any of the Epistles grant the Gentile believers in Yeshua their own, separate times of worship and holy days.

In fact, in the days of the apostles, Jewish and Gentile believers kept the *moadim* together in the Temple as well as the synagogues. The notion of

Gentiles not keeping the Biblically appointed times simply had not presented itself as an option. It was only when Gentile Christians separated themselves from Judaism that God's appointed times were no longer observed by the Church. Much to their loss, the Church Fathers in various councils replaced the Sabbath with Sunday, Passover was changed to Easter, and the other festivals mentioned above fell into complete disuse.

These appointed times (called convocations) which are meant for Jew and Gentile alike, are times of special holiness. They are times to come together and meet with the Lord, to worship Him, and remember what he has done for us, does for us now, and will continue to do for His people. By observing these festivals, we participate in the holiness that God intends for our lives. By ignoring them, and participating in festivals not designed by God, we choose the traditions of men over God's eternal Word.

In this week's *parashah* (Torah portion), God introduces the *moadim* in verse 2 and then immediately begins speaking about the Sabbath. This comes to teach us that one who desecrates the festivals is viewed as one who has desecrated the Sabbath, while one who observes the festivals is viewed as one who has observed the Sabbath. How can this be? How are the two related?

R. Moshe Feinstein (in *Darash Moshe*) says that the lessons of the Sabbath and the festivals are complimentary. The observance of the Sabbath demonstrates our faith in the reality that God created the world in six days and ceased from working on the seventh day. The observance of the festivals demonstrates our belief that God Himself continues the management of the world, that He is sovereign, and changes nature according to His purposes. We celebrate Passover to commemorate the truth that God took us out of Egypt, made us His people; and also during the same *moed* sent His Son to bring about the ultimate redemption of

the world. We celebrate *Sukkoth* (The Feast of Tabernacles) to commemorate that He provided us with the Clouds of Glory to shelter us in the wilderness and also because He “tabernacled” among us in the flesh of His Son, Yeshua, our Messiah (and will again, may it be speedily in our days). We celebrate *Shavuot* (Pentecost) because God gave us His Torah so that we could pursue a proper path as His children and also to commemorate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit who promises to write God's Torah on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31) as part of the benefits of the New Covenant.

The Torah places the observance of the Sabbath next to observance of the festivals to teach us that we cannot believe in only one of these truths, we must embrace them both. If one believes that God created the world but thinks that He is no longer maintaining and running the world, it is as if he does not accept God as the Creator. For if he does not believe that God runs the world, then he has no reason to follow God's commandments. Such an attitude will eventually lead a person into idolatry, as occurred in the Christian Church when it left behind the Torah. Without God's appointed times, believers were left with one choice—to appropriate pagan festivals disguised with Christian meaning which they hoped would fill the gap.

Similarly, if a person believes that God runs the world, but thinks that it was created by other forces or came into being many millions of years ago, his belief in God's control will also not endure. Thus, the Torah places these two injunctions together, to teach that they are two parts of a whole; one must believe both that God created the world and that everything that occurs is under his management.<sup>1</sup>

Since the observance of these festivals is a testimony that God is Creator and King, how should one observe them? For the scope of this

<sup>1</sup> For a frightening look at current events in science regarding this issue, see Ben Stein's excellent movie [Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed](http://www.expelledthemovie.com).  
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Vort, we will look at Shabbat since it occurs once every seven days.

One of the most distorted commandments of Shabbat is the *oneg Shabbat* (the delight of Shabbat). Through this commandment, a person is obligated to engage in physical pleasures on Shabbat—wearing nice clothes, eating delicious foods, having marital relations, and taking a small nap, etc.

However, the Sages warn that this *mitzvah* (commandment) is not fulfilled by spending the day catering to one's own pleasures. The reward of Shabbat comes if we approach the *mitzvah* as one who is not used to spending money and time on luxuries or indulging in pleasures, but we make an exception on Shabbat as if we are honoring an important guest.

It is a terrible sin and profanation of God's name for those who spend Shabbat overeating, sleeping off their meals, being lethargic, and dulling their minds. Yes, the food should be high quality and tasty and the nap should be fulfilling but each should be done in small measure. After eating and napping, a person should rise and spend the rest of his time studying Torah, fellowshiping with other believers, and attending to other's needs to the extent of his abilities.

*Beit HaLevi* points out that there are two types of *mitzvot*. In one, a person is required to abstain or even shun that which the world offers. On Shabbat however, we commemorate God's creation of the world and all that is within it. Therefore, the *mitzvah* of *oneg Shabbat* is to embrace that which the world offers and to derive pleasure from it. However, it must be done in a way that takes the enjoyment a person has and elevates it. In so doing, we proclaim the Name of God on even our own physical pleasure.

May we merit the abundance with which God blesses the world so that we may turn it around and offer it back to Him as a testimony and a praise of His faithfulness and power. Amein.